HIROSHIMA

WHO DISAGREED WITH THE ATOMIC BOMBING?
Compiled and annotated by Doug Long

From what we read in the general media, it seems like almost *everyone* felt the atomic bombings of Japan were necessary. Aren't the people who disagree with those actions just trying to find fault with America? — Doug Long

DWIGHT EISENHOWER

"...in [July] 1945... Secretary of War Stimson, visiting my headquarters in Germany, informed me that our government was preparing to drop an atomic bomb on Japan. I was one of those who felt that there were a number of cogent reasons to question the wisdom of such an act. ...the Secretary, upon giving me the news of the successful bomb test in New Mexico, and of the plan for using it, asked for my reaction, apparently expecting a vigorous assent.

"During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of 'face'. The Secretary was deeply perturbed by my attitude…"
— Dwight Eisenhower, *Mandate For Change*, pg. 380

In a Newsweek interview, Eisenhower again recalled the meeting with Stimson:
"...the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."
— Ike on Ike, *Newsweek*, 11/11/63

Admiral William D. Leahy

(Chief of Staff to Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman)

"It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons.

"The lethal possibilities of atomic warfare in the future are frightening. My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."
— William Leahy, *I Was There*, pg. 441.

Herbert Hoover

On May 28, 1945, Hoover visited President Truman and suggested a way to end the Pacific war quickly: "I am convinced that if you, as President, will make a shortwave broadcast to the people of Japan - tell them they can have their Emperor if they surrender, that it will not mean unconditional surrender except for the militarists - you'll get a peace in Japan - you'll have both wars over."
— Richard Norton Smith, An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover, pg. 347.

On August 8, 1945, after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Hoover wrote to *Army and Navy Journal* publisher Colonel John Callan O'Laughlin, "The use of the atomic bomb, with its indiscriminate killing of women and children, revolts my soul."
— quoted by Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, pg. 635.

"...the Japanese were prepared to negotiate all the way from February 1945...up to and before the time the atomic bombs were dropped; ...if such leads had been followed up, there would have been no occasion to drop the [atomic] bombs."
— quoted by Barton Bernstein in Philip Nobile, ed., *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, pg. 142

Hoover biographer Richard Norton Smith has written: "Use of the bomb had besmirched America's reputation, he [Hoover] told friends. It ought to have been described in graphic terms before being flung out into the sky over Japan."
— Richard Norton Smith, *An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover*, pg. 349-350.

In early May of 1946 Hoover met with General Douglas MacArthur. Hoover recorded in his diary, "I told MacArthur of my memorandum of mid-May 1945 to Truman, that peace could be had with Japan by which our major objectives would be accomplished. MacArthur said that was correct and that we would have avoided all of the losses, the Atomic bomb, and the entry of Russia into Manchuria."
— Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, pg. 350-351.

General Douglas MacArthur

MacArthur biographer William Manchester has described MacArthur's reaction to the issuance by the Allies of the Potsdam Proclamation to Japan: "...the Potsdam declaration in July, demand[ed] that Japan surrender unconditionally or face 'prompt and utter

destruction.' MacArthur was appalled. He knew that the Japanese would never renounce their emperor, and that without him an orderly transition to peace would be impossible anyhow, because his people would never submit to Allied occupation unless he ordered it. Ironically, when the surrender did come, it was conditional, and the condition was a continuation of the imperial reign. Had the General's advice been followed, the resort to atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki might have been unnecessary."
— William Manchester, American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964, pg. 512.

Norman Cousins was a consultant to General MacArthur during the American occupation of Japan. Cousins writes of his conversations with MacArthur, "MacArthur's views about the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were starkly different from what the general public supposed." He continues, "When I asked General MacArthur about the decision to drop the bomb, I was surprised to learn he had not even been consulted. What, I asked, would his advice have been? He replied that he saw no military justification for the dropping of the bomb. The war might have ended weeks earlier, he said, if the United States had agreed, as it later did anyway, to the retention of the institution of the emperor."
— Norman Cousins, The Pathology of Power, pg. 65, 70-71.

Joseph Grew

(Under Sec. of State)
In a February 12, 1947 letter to Henry Stimson (Sec. of War during WWII), Grew responded to the defense of the atomic bombings Stimson had made in a February 1947 *Harpers* magazine article:

"...in the light of available evidence I myself and others felt that if such a categorical statement about the [retention of the] dynasty had been issued in May, 1945, the surrender-minded elements in the [Japanese] Government might well have been afforded by such a statement a valid reason and the necessary strength to come to an early clearcut decision.

"If surrender could have been brought about in May, 1945, or even in June or July, before the entrance of Soviet Russia into the [Pacific] war and the use of the atomic bomb, the world would have been the gainer."
— Grew quoted in Barton Bernstein, ed., *The Atomic Bomb*, pg. 29-32.

John McCloy

(Assistant Sec. of War)
"I have always felt that if, in our ultimatum to the Japanese government issued from Potsdam [in July 1945], we had referred to the retention of the emperor as a constitutional monarch and had made some reference to the reasonable accessibility of

raw materials to the future Japanese government, it would have been accepted. Indeed, I believe that even in the form it was delivered, there was some disposition on the part of the Japanese to give it favorable consideration. When the war was over I arrived at this conclusion after talking with a number of Japanese officials who had been closely associated with the decision of the then Japanese government, to reject the ultimatum, as it was presented. I believe we missed the opportunity of effecting a Japanese surrender, completely satisfactory to us, without the necessity of dropping the bombs."
— McCloy quoted in James Reston, *Deadline*, pg. 500.

Ralph Bard

(Under Sec. of the Navy)

On June 28, 1945, a memorandum written by Bard the previous day was given to Sec. of War Henry Stimson. It stated, in part:

"Following the three-power [July 1945 Potsdam] conference emissaries from this country could contact representatives from Japan somewhere on the China Coast and make representations with regard to Russia's position [they were about to declare war on Japan] and at the same time give them some information regarding the proposed use of atomic power, together with whatever assurances the President might care to make with regard to the [retention of the] Emperor of Japan and the treatment of the Japanese nation following unconditional surrender. It seems quite possible to me that this presents the opportunity which the Japanese are looking for.

"I don't see that we have anything in particular to lose in following such a program." He concluded the memorandum by noting, "The only way to find out is to try it out."

Memorandum on the Use of S-1 Bomb, Manhattan Engineer District Records, Harrison-Bundy files, folder # 77, National Archives (also contained in: Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed*, 1987 edition, pg. 307-308).

Later Bard related, "...it definitely seemed to me that the Japanese were becoming weaker and weaker. They were surrounded by the Navy. They couldn't get any imports and they couldn't export anything. Naturally, as time went on and the war developed in our favor it was quite logical to hope and expect that with the proper kind of a warning the Japanese would then be in a position to make peace, which would have made it unnecessary for us to drop the bomb and have had to bring Russia in...".
quoted in Len Giovannitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision To Drop the Bomb*, pg. 144-145, 324.

Bard also asserted, "I think that the Japanese were ready for peace, and they already had approached the Russians and, I think, the Swiss. And that suggestion of [giving] a warning

[of the atomic bomb] was a face-saving proposition for them, and one that they could have readily accepted." He continued, "In my opinion, the Japanese war was really won before we ever used the atom bomb. Thus, it wouldn't have been necessary for us to disclose our nuclear position and stimulate the Russians to develop the same thing much more rapidly than they would have if we had not dropped the bomb."
— *War Was Really Won Before We Used A-Bomb*, U.S. News and World Report, 8/15/60, pg. 73-75.

Lewis Strauss

(Special Assistant to the Sec. of the Navy)

Strauss recalled a recommendation he gave to Sec. of the Navy James Forrestal before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima:

"I proposed to Secretary Forrestal that the weapon should be demonstrated before it was used. Primarily it was because it was clear to a number of people, myself among them, that the war was very nearly over. The Japanese were nearly ready to capitulate... My proposal to the Secretary was that the weapon should be demonstrated over some area accessible to Japanese observers and where its effects would be dramatic. I remember suggesting that a satisfactory place for such a demonstration would be a large forest of cryptomeria trees not far from Tokyo. The cryptomeria tree is the Japanese version of our redwood... I anticipated that a bomb detonated at a suitable height above such a forest... would lay the trees out in windrows from the center of the explosion in all directions as though they were matchsticks, and, of course, set them afire in the center. It seemed to me that a demonstration of this sort would prove to the Japanese that we could destroy any of their cities at will... Secretary Forrestal agreed wholeheartedly with the recommendation…"

Strauss added, "It seemed to me that such a weapon was not necessary to bring the war to a successful conclusion, that once used it would find its way into the armaments of the world…"
— quoted in Len Giovannitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision To Drop the Bomb*, pg. 145, 325.

Paul Nitze

(Vice Chairman, U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey)

In 1950 Nitze would recommend a massive military buildup, and in the 1980s he was an arms control negotiator in the Reagan administration. In July of 1945 he was assigned the task of writing a strategy for the air attack on Japan. Nitze later wrote:
"The plan I devised was essentially this: Japan was already isolated from the standpoint of ocean shipping. The only remaining means of transportation were the rail network and

intercoastal shipping, though our submarines and mines were rapidly eliminating the latter as well. A concentrated air attack on the essential lines of transportation, including railroads and (through the use of the earliest accurately targetable glide bombs, then emerging from development) the Kammon tunnels which connected Honshu with Kyushu, would isolate the Japanese home islands from one another and fragment the enemy's base of operations. I believed that interdiction of the lines of transportation would be sufficiently effective so that additional bombing of urban industrial areas would not be necessary.

"While I was working on the new plan of air attack... [I] concluded that even without the atomic bomb, Japan was likely to surrender in a matter of months. My own view was that Japan would capitulate by November 1945."
Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, pg. 36-37

The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey group, assigned by President Truman to study the air attacks on Japan, produced a report in July of 1946 that was primarily written by Nitze and reflected his reasoning:

"Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945 and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."
quoted in Barton Bernstein, *The Atomic Bomb*, pg. 52-56.

In his memoir, written in 1989, Nitze repeated,
"Even without the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it seemed highly unlikely, given what we found to have been the mood of the Japanese government, that a U.S. invasion of the islands [scheduled for November 1, 1945] would have been necessary."
Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, pg. 44-45.

Albert Einstein

Einstein was not directly involved in the Manhattan Project (which developed the atomic bomb). In 1905, as part of his Special Theory of Relativity, he made the intriguing point that a relatively large amount of energy was contained in and could be released from a relatively small amount of matter. This became best known by the equation E=mc2. The atomic bomb was not based upon this theory but clearly illustrated it.

In 1939 Einstein signed a letter to President Roosevelt that was drafted by the scientist Leo Szilard. Received by FDR in October of that year, the letter from Einstein called for and sparked the beginning of U.S. government support for a program to build an atomic bomb, lest the Nazis build one first.

Einstein did not speak publicly on the atomic bombing of Japan until a year afterward. A short article on the front page of the *New York Times* contained his view:

"Prof. Albert Einstein... said that he was sure that President Roosevelt would have forbidden the atomic bombing of Hiroshima had he been alive and that it was probably carried out to end the Pacific war before Russia could participate."
Einstein Deplores Use of Atom Bomb, New York Times, 8/19/46, pg. 1
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Regarding the 1939 letter to Roosevelt, his biographer, Ronald Clark, has noted:
"As far as his own life was concerned, one thing seemed quite clear. 'I made one great mistake in my life,' he said to Linus Pauling, who spent an hour with him on the morning of November 11, 1954, '...when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made; but there was some justification — the danger that the Germans would make them.'".
— Ronald Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times*, pg. 620.

Leo Szilard

(The first scientist to conceive of how an atomic bomb might be made - 1933)

For many scientists, one motivation for developing the atomic bomb was to make sure Germany, well known for its scientific capabilities, did not get it first. This was true for Szilard, a Manhattan Project scientist.

"In the spring of '45 it was clear that the war against Germany would soon end, and so I began to ask myself, 'What is the purpose of continuing the development of the bomb, and how would the bomb be used if the war with Japan has not ended by the time we have the first bombs?"
— Szilard quoted in Spencer Weart and Gertrud Weiss Szilard, ed., *Leo Szilard: His Version of the Facts*, pg. 181.

After Germany surrendered, Szilard attempted to meet with President Truman. Instead, he was given an appointment with Truman's Sec. of State to be, James Byrnes. In that meeting of May 28, 1945, Szilard told Byrnes that the atomic bomb should not be used on Japan. Szilard recommended, instead, coming to an international agreement on the control of atomic weapons before shocking other nations by their use:

"I thought that it would be a mistake to disclose the existence of the bomb to the world before the government had made up its mind about how to handle the situation after the war. Using the bomb certainly would disclose that the bomb existed." According to Szilard, Byrnes was not interested in international control: "Byrnes... was concerned about Russia's postwar behavior. Russian troops had moved into Hungary and Rumania,

and Byrnes thought it would be very difficult to persuade Russia to withdraw her troops from these countries, that Russia might be more manageable if impressed by American military might, and that a demonstration of the bomb might impress Russia." Szilard could see that he wasn't getting though to Byrnes; "I was concerned at this point that by demonstrating the bomb and using it in the war against Japan, we might start an atomic arms race between America and Russia which might end with the destruction of both countries."
— Szilard quoted in Spencer Weart and Gertrud Weiss Szilard, ed., *Leo Szilard: His Version of the Facts*, pg. 184.

Two days later, Szilard met with J. Robert Oppenheimer, the head scientist in the Manhattan Project. "I told Oppenheimer that I thought it would be a very serious mistake to use the bomb against the cities of Japan. Oppenheimer didn't share my view." "'Well, said Oppenheimer, 'don't you think that if we tell the Russians what we intend to do and then use the bomb in Japan, the Russians will understand it?'. 'They'll understand it only too well,' Szilard replied, no doubt with Byrnes's intentions in mind."
— Szilard quoted in Spencer Weart and Gertrud Weiss Szilard, ed., *Leo Szilard: His Version of the Facts*, pg. 185; also William Lanouette, *Genius In the Shadows: A Biography of Leo Szilard*, pg. 266-267.

The Franck Report: Political and Social Problems

The race for the atomic bomb ended with the May 1945 surrender of Germany, the only other power capable of creating an atomic bomb in the near future. This led some Manhattan Project scientists in Chicago to become among the first to consider the long-term consequences of using the atomic bomb against Japan in World War II. Their report came to be known as the Franck Report, and included major contributions from Leo Szilard (referred to above). Although an attempt was made to give the report to Sec. of War Henry Stimson, it is unclear as to whether he ever received it.

International control of nuclear weapons for the prevention of a larger nuclear war was the report's primary concern:

"If we consider international agreement on total prevention of nuclear warfare as the paramount objective, and believe that it can be achieved, this kind of introduction of atomic weapons [on Japan] to the world may easily destroy all our chances of success. Russia... will be deeply shocked. It will be very difficult to persuade the world that a nation which was capable of secretly preparing and suddenly releasing a weapon, as indiscriminate as the rocket bomb and a thousand times more destructive, is to be trusted in its proclaimed desire of having such weapons abolished by international agreement."

The Franck Committee, which could not know that the Japanese government would approach Russia in July to try to end the war, compared the short-term possible saving of lives by using the bomb on Japan with the long-term possible massive loss of lives in a nuclear war:

"...looking forward to an international agreement on prevention of nuclear warfare — the military advantages and the saving of American lives, achieved by the sudden use of atomic bombs against Japan, may be outweighed by the ensuing loss of confidence and wave of horror and repulsion, sweeping over the rest of the world…".

The report questioned the ability of destroying Japanese cities with atomic bombs to bring surrender when destroying Japanese cities with conventional bombs had not done so. It recommended a demonstration of the atomic bomb for Japan in an unpopulated area. Facing the long-term consequences with Russia, the report stated prophetically:
"If no international agreement is concluded immediately after the first demonstration, this will mean a flying start of an unlimited armaments race."

The report pointed out that the United States, with its highly concentrated urban areas, would become a prime target for nuclear weapons and concluded:
"We believe that these considerations make the use of nuclear bombs for an early, unannounced attack against Japan inadvisable. If the United States would be the first to release this new means of indiscriminate destruction upon mankind, she would sacrifice public support throughout the world, precipitate the race of armaments, and prejudice the possibility of reaching an international agreement on the future control of such weapons."
— *Political and Social Problems*, Manhattan Engineer District Records, Harrison-Bundy files, folder # 76, National Archives (also contained in: Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed*, 1987 edition, pg. 323-333).

Ellis Zacharias

(Deputy Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence)

Based on a series of intelligence reports received in late 1944, Zacharias, long a student of Japan's people and culture, believed the Japan would soon be ripe for surrender if the proper approach were taken. For him, that approach was not as simple as bludgeoning Japanese cities:

"...while Allied leaders were immediately inclined to support all innovations however bold and novel in the strictly military sphere, they frowned upon similar innovations in the sphere of diplomatic and psychological warfare."
Ellis Zacharias, *The A-Bomb Was Not Needed*, United Nations World, Aug. 1949, pg. 29.

Zacharias saw that there were diplomatic and religious (the status of the Emperor) elements that blocked the doves in Japan's government from making their move:

"What prevented them from suing for peace or from bringing their plot into the open was their uncertainty on two scores. First, they wanted to know the meaning of unconditional surrender and the fate we planned for Japan after defeat. Second, they tried to obtain from us assurances that the Emperor could remain on the throne after surrender."
— Ellis Zacharias, *Eighteen Words That Bagged Japan*, Saturday Evening Post, 11/17/45, pg. 17.

To resolve these issues, Zacharias developed several plans for secret negotiations with Japanese representatives; all were rejected by the U.S. government. Instead, a series of psychological warfare radio broadcasts by Zacharias was later approved. In the July 21, 1945 broadcast, Zacharias made an offer to Japan that stirred controversy in the U.S.: a surrender based on the Atlantic Charter. On July 25th, the U.S. intercepted a secret transmission from Japan's Foreign Minister (Togo) to their Ambassador to Moscow (Sato), who was trying to set up a meeting with the Soviets to negotiate an end to the war. The message referred to the Zacharias broadcast and stated:

"...special attention should be paid to the fact that at this time the United States referred to the Atlantic Charter. As for Japan, it is impossible to accept unconditional surrender under any circumstances, but we should like to communicate to the other party through appropriate channels that we have no objection to a peace based on the Atlantic Charter."
— U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conference of Berlin (Potsdam) 1945, vol. 2*, pg. 1260-1261.

But on July 26th, the U.S., Great Britain, and China publicly issued the Potsdam Proclamation demanding "unconditional surrender" from Japan. Zacharias later commented on the favorable Japanese response to his broadcast:

"But though we gained a victory, it was soon to be canceled out by the Potsdam Declaration and the way it was handled.
"Instead of being a diplomatic instrument, transmitted through regular diplomatic channels and giving the Japanese a chance to answer, it was put on the radio as a propaganda instrument pure and simple. The whole maneuver, in fact, completely disregarded all essential psychological factors dealing with Japan."

Zacharias continued, "The Potsdam Declaration, in short, wrecked everything we had been working for to prevent further bloodshed...

"Just when the Japanese were ready to capitulate, we went ahead and introduced to the world the most devastating weapon it had ever seen and, in effect, gave the go-ahead to Russia to swarm over Eastern Asia.
"Washington decided that Japan had been given its chance and now it was time to use the A-bomb.

"I submit that it was the wrong decision. It was wrong on strategic grounds. And it was wrong on humanitarian grounds."
— Ellis Zacharias, *How We Bungled the Japanese Surrender*, Look, 6/6/50, pg. 19-21.

General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz

(In charge of Air Force operations in the Pacific)

General Spaatz was the person who received the order for the Air Force to "deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about 3 August 1945..."(Leslie Groves, *Now It Can Be Told*, pg. 308). In a 1964 interview, Spaatz explained:

"The dropping of the atomic bomb was done by a military man under military orders. We're supposed to carry out orders and not question them."

In the same interview, Spaatz referred to the Japanese military's plan to get better peace terms, and he gave an alternative to the atomic bombings:

"If we were to go ahead with the plans for a conventional invasion with ground and naval forces, I believe the Japanese thought that they could inflict very heavy casualties on us and possibly as a result get better surrender terms. On the other hand if they knew or were told that no invasion would take place [and] that bombing would continue until the surrender, why I think the surrender would have taken place just about the same time."
— (*Herbert Feis Papers*, Box 103, N.B.C. Interviews, Carl Spaatz interview by Len Giovannitti, Library of Congress).

Brigadier General Carter Clarke

(The military intelligence officer in charge of preparing intercepted Japanese cables - the MAGIC summaries - for Truman and his advisors)

"...when we didn't need to do it, and we knew we didn't need to do it, and they knew that we knew we didn't need to do it, we used them as an experiment for two atomic bombs."
— quoted in Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*, pg. 359.